The Southern PATRIOT

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Leaven of Decency

As the school crisis mounts this fall, the Southern Patriot reaffirms the belief it has always held: that from within Southern communities themselves will come the leaven of decency that will ultimately strike down the barriers of segregation.

This does not mean that we do not advocate the strongest possible position and action by the Federal Government. We favor strong civil rights laws and their strict enforcement. But these things are only a first step: they provide the impact under which Southern leadership of a new kind, white as well as Negro, can develop.

We print, beginning on this page, two articles which we think are indicative of this trend. One is from Norfolk, Va., the story of how community action for integration was organized during September under the leadership of a white minister and his wife; their actions were typical of a force in Southern society that was beginning to make itself felt in several Virginia communities. The other story is a collection of letters from Little Rock, telling what white citizens who have taken their stand four-square for integration are doing in that beleaguered city.

We make no estimates as to the relative strength of this leaven in Southern life at this time. But we believe that, under the impact of events, it is growing. As the crisis deepens, people who believe in brotherhood and equality are rising to new heights of human development—matching in courage and dedication the Abolitionists of a century ago. We believe that in the final accounting they are invincible.

Report from Virginia

How One Community Organized

(By Staff Correspondent)

NORFOLK, Va.—On the historic night of Sept. 12, white and Negro students assigned to Norview High School met for the first time at Oakdale Presbyterian Church here.

They had been assembled to prepare them for attending school together under orders of the courts of the United States.

The gathering in the white church was part of the resistance aroused against Virginia's politicians when they called for massive resistance to school integration. The politicians wanted to close the schools to thwart integration.

Many people let public officials know that they wanted an education for their children, whether it was integrated or segregated. The cry of "Save Our Schools" was heard in Norfolk, Charlottesville, Arlington, Front Royal, and elsewhere.

The meeting at Oakdale Presbyterian Church was organized and conducted by the Rev. William B. Abbot, pastor of the church, and his wife Marguerite. They are typical of the white people in Virginia who have made up their minds that segregation is an evil and must be abolished—now.

Mr. and Mrs. Abbot invited people from all the churches in their neighborhood to send parents and students to the interracial affair on Sept. 12. This was a particularly auspicious date, for on that afternoon the U.S. Supreme Court refused to give the Little Rock School Board a delay in the integration of Central High School.

The area served by Oakdale Presbyterian Church includes Norview High, to which Negro pupils had been assigned by order of the U.S. District Court. About half of these pupils attend Coronado Congregational Christian Church, of which the pastor is the Rev. Edgar L. Mack.

The Abbots worked very closely with Mr. Mack in arranging the meeting. Eleven white and three Negro churches were represented, including a Roman Catholic church. Among the 60-odd persons present were about 20 Negroes, including some of the Norview students. The bulk of the people were white students who were to attend the same school.

The meeting opened with a panel discussion of segregation by a railroad engineer, a postal worker, and Mr. Abbot. The engineer attempted to play the role of a segregationist, but he had difficulty making silly statements sound plausible. This brought repeated laughs and giggles from the audience.

After the panel discussion, the grown-ups were asked to leave so the children could let their hair down in the ensuing discussion.

The children finally agreed that school integration would come peacefully if parents stayed out of it and left the matter to the young people. One child estimated that 75% of the students would go along with integration because they wanted an education. The president of the Senior High Fellowship of Oakdale

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Letters from Little Rock

SCEF Advisory Committee Member Eldon Dennis wrote from Little Rock in September: "The present situation in Little Rock is bad and it very possibly will get worse before it gets better, but it looks brighter from the inside than it does from the outside. . . There are a few courageous individuals and groups who have been willing to speak out publicly for desegregation and others who work more quietly behind the scenes. . .

"There have been very few outbreaks of violence—even scuffles between whites and Negroes; few if any unpleasantnesses on the desegregated buses; and what racial tensions have been generated seem to be confined to a very few people. The segregationist organizations remain very small in numbers of members, and there is little evidence that they get any widespread sympathy. . .

"The religious groups who are trying to break down the wall between the races are the minority groups such as the Quakers, the Bahai's and the Unitarians. . . . The local organization representing the Southern Regional Council is accepting the challenge of the crisis with increased activity. Two unorganized groups—one meeting Tuesday evening and the other Thursday morning—have drawn in many people of good will of both races.

"It seems little enough, doesn't it? But I am still convinced that the vast majority of people in Little Rock want law and order, that for most of us our race prejudices are not deep-seated. . ."

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Mrs. Edith Tyra, a white mother and church leader who is outspoken for integration, writes: "The re-election of Governor Faubus was a bitter blow to those of us who had worked so hard for Truth

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The Price We Pay

The Wall Street Journal reports that at Little Rock, Ark., which has come to symbolize the South's anti-integration efforts, not a single major new industrial plant has been located in the city's metropolitan area since May, 1957. Nor has any land in Little Rock's 1,000-acre industrial district, just outside of town, been sold since that time.

Nation of Scaredy-Cats?

SCEF Head Hits Un-Americans

SCEF President Aubrey Williams called for abolition of the House Committee on Un-American Activities in a recent address at a public meeting sponsored in Los Angeles by the Citizens Committee to Freserve American Freedom.

Williams described the visit of the Un-American Committee to Atlanta during the summer and said: "I charge that this Committee's visit to Atlanta resulted in an open and flagrant harassing of white Southern integrationists. . . ."

He said the Committee made no effort to look into Un-American terror against Negroes and denial of civil rights.

Other excerpts from the speech:

"These committees are not looking for Communists . . . . the people they are really after are the liberals, persons of good will, New Dealers, labor organizers, humanitarians and equalitarians. . . .

"These committees are making a nation of scaredy-cats out of Americans . . . we have become a nation of hitchhikers on the Freedom Train. We don't want to say anything; we don't want to even discuss anything; we just want to ride, hoping nobody will ask us any questions. . . .

"It is probably a condition of freedom that every generation must accept a rendezvous with those who would take away the liberties of people. Each generation, it seems, has to a great extent to fight over the same battles. . . ."

(Copies of the full text of Williams' speech may be obtained free from SCEF, 822 Perdido St., New Orleans 12, La.)

How One Community Organized in Virginia

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Church set this figure even higher—saying it was 80 to 90%.

While the children discussed their problems in the sanctuary of the church, the adults had coffee and cakes in an adjoining room. There Mr. Abbot circulated a statement that had already been signed by 200 white persons. More than 1,000 signatures were obtained within the next few days.

This statement was intended for publication as an ad in the Norfolk Virginian-Pilot to let public officials know the feeling of the community. It said:

"We, the undersigned, believe that public education is vital for the preservation of civic and religious liberty in the United States of America. We are prepared to commit ourselves to non-violent means to insure a peaceable transition to desegregated education."

Among the signers was William Woodall, Jr., Clerk of the Session of Mr. Abbot's church. On Sept. 3, Woodall had sent Governor Almond a letter from the Session urging him to save public school education in Virginia, and stating: "The 'silent South' is becoming increasingly Christian in its concern for justice for all men. We assure you—and this is not hearsay—that we are not alone."

The truth of this was demonstrated a week later when the Rev. Olin Pendleton, then secretary of the Ministers Interracial Fellowship of Norfolk, asked ministers to volunteer "to escort a Negro child into the school building on the opening day or days of school."

Within three days, seven white ministers volunteered for this service. They also pledged to lead their congregations "in prayer for quietness and order with reference to desegregation."

Mr. Pendleton said the response was from the younger ministers; that the older men are remaining silent.

Mr. Abbot is representative of this younger group of ministers moving to the fore in the integration movement. He is a native of Louisville, Ga., and was formerly pastor of a church at Berryville, Va., the home of Senator Byrd, a leading segregationist and boss of the political machine that rules Virginia. Mr. and Mrs. Abbot left Berryville two years ago after some unpleasantness that followed their letting the NAACP hold a meeting in their church.

Mr. Abbot said he began preparing people for integration in Norfolk when he learned that no other agency or group was doing anything about it. He and his wife were soon joined by other ministers and laymen of like mind.

The effect of their efforts was seen in late August when the Norfolk School Board defied state authorities and ordered integration. This was a distinct shock to segregationists. And the federal judge hearing the Norfolk school cases told friends that for the first time he was getting a majority of letters approving his rulings upholding integration. This was on Aug. 29.

Mr. Abbot's church has over 500 members. About 35 left because of the Abbots' activities but an equal number joined for the same reason. Some of the dissidents tried to join a neighboring Presbyterian church but the pastor there refused to accept them when he found out why they had left Oakdale. Several drifted back to Mr. Abbot's church—integration notwithstanding.

Award Proposed

Pittsburgh Courier Editor P. L. Prattis suggested in his column September 13 that an award similar to the annual Spingarn Award for Negroes should be established for white persons who have given their all to the cause of democracy, and added: "Certainly one of the leading candidates for such an award should be Aubrey Williams, president of the Southern Conference Educational Fund. Mr. Williams has been on the firing line for many years, even before he was the administrator for the National Youth Administration in the thirties. He has withstood the darts and arrows of the wicked. He has endured social ostracism . . . He could have left the South. But he didn't. He stuck and is still sticking. I appreciate his heart."

STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP

Statement required by the Act of August 24, 1912, as Amended by the Acts of March 3, 1933, and July 2, 1946 (Title 39, United States Code, Section 233) showing the ownership, management, and circulation of The Southern Patriot, published monthly except July and August, at Nashville, Tenn., for October, 1958.

1. The names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor, and business managers are: Publisher, Southern Conference Educational Fund, Inc., 822 Perdido St., New Orleans, La.; editors, Anne and Carl Braden, 4403 Virginia Ave., Louisville, Ky.

2. The owner is: Southern Conference Educational Fund, Inc., 822 Perdido St., New Orleans, La.

3. The known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding 1 percent or more of total amount of bonds, montgages, or other securities are: (If there are none, so state.) None.

JAMES A. DOMBROWSKI, Exec. Director

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 12th day of September, 1958.

IRVING NOVICH.

(My commission expires at death.

Southern News Briefs

Virginia Labor Urges Moderation

The Virginia AFL-CIO executive committee authorized circulation of 50,000 pamphlets on the state's school crisis, attacking the policy of "massive resistance." The pamphlet states: "If Virginia is not to become schoolless, the moderates who make up a majority of the state's citizenry, must speak up, organize, and challenge the views of their state officials. . . ."

* * * *

The Texas Observer reports that a new poll in Texas shows that one-third of the people in Texas favor integration and another third think it will come in all parts of the state. This contrasts with a similar poll four years ago, when only one-fifth favored integration and almost half favored resisting or evading the law.

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The "white only" label has been removed from all Birmingham civil service jobs, the Personnel Board office announced. The Rev. F. L. Shuttlesworth, president of the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights, has been leading efforts for fair hiring.

Negro registration in Louisiana increased 5.5 per cent in the first six months of 1958.

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P.D. East reports in The Petal Paper that Negroes have almost no access to public libraries in Mississippi.

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The University of Florida finally accepted its first Negro student this year. Racial bars also fell by court order at the New Orleans extension of Louisiana State University.

* * * *

The Memphis, Tenn., Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church, U.S. (South) broke with tradition recently by meeting in a Negro church. The Presbytery is made up of 65 churches in the Memphis area, all of which are white except the one where the meeting was held.

* * * *

The Christian social relations department of the Baltimore Council of Churches is serving as a steering committee for several church and civic organizations which are working for passage of a city ordinance to outlaw segregation in public accommodations.

Letters from Little Rock

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. . . From the talk which I hear, most of the people who voted for him were taken in by his talk of States Rights. . .

"There is beginning to be an awakening among some of the people here to the seriousness of closing the schools. It is not too hopeful yet, just a slightly different 'climate', as the politicians are fond of calling it. Can't put my finger on anything tangible, but am hearing more talk about the necessity of an education for our children and less about keeping the Negroes out of school. . .

"We have been working with the Fellowship of Reconciliation this summer. . . There are still people who value their children's education above their petty prejudices. Most of those who favor closing the schools either have none of their own or no education themselves. . ."

* * * *

And from a white woman, a professional worker: "As the Negro fights for civil rights, let him not forget he is backed by a white minority . . . A growing number of white people in Little Rock are meeting in small discussion and communications groups with their Negro friends, showing by their presence their desire to help.

"Most of these people have no political power; their word is not executive in public policy. Yet it is growing in private power . . . The white minority in this work at the present time of school crisis is a prayerful, sincere, closely knit group of people who are daily growing in dedication and numbers. . .

"We are the new minority in the South . . . The two minorities, the Negro and white friends of the Negro, have joined forces and hands in this common fight for democratic justice for all men . . . We are not frightened. . ."

Bouquet of the Month

The Patriot's Bouquet of the Month goes to Miss Angela Evans, 15-year-old Student Council president at the Van Buren, Ark., high school, who had the courage to stand up before a crowd of shouting segregationist parents and urge the Van Buren School Board to continue integration at her school.

Miss Evans took her stand after a strike of white students had succeeded, at least temporarily, in forcing 13 Negro students out of the school. As a parents' delegation shouted objections, she told the board she had taken a poll among the white student body and found that the majority favored integration.

The widely-publicized student strike never drew more than 45 of the school's 635 enrollment.

Florida Vote Figures Tell Shameful Story

The effect of voting restrictions in North Florida, sometimes reinforced by terror, is shown by recent registration figures from that state.

In seven counties with a total voting-age non-white population of 17,403, only 127 Negroes are registered to vote.

In most Florida counties, there are no obstacles to Negro registration. But this does not hold in North Florida, scene of most of the lynchings and violence through the years.

Three of the seven counties where the situation is the worst have no Negro voters at all; these are Union with a non-white voting-age population of 2,453; Liberty with a potential of 333; and Lafayette with a potential of 176. In the other four, the Negro registration figures, as compared with the number of voting-age non-whites, are: Gadsden, with 7 voters out of a potential of 10,930; Flagler, with 19 out of 872; Gilchrist with 34 out of 203; and Taylor, with 67 out of 1,945.

SCEF Aids in N. C. Civil Rights Cases

(By Staff Correspondent)

WELDON, N. C.—Citizens from all over northeastern North Carolina have formed a committee to carry the case of Mrs. Louise Lassiter through the federal courts and to uphold the right of her attorney to represent her.

James R. Walker, Jr., 34-year-old civil rights attorney, has been jailed, fined, and otherwise harassed since he took Mrs. Lassiter's case over two years ago. She is seeking the right to register and vote without having to take the North Carolina literacy test, which she contends is in violation of the U. S. Constitution.

The Walker-Lassiter Defense Fund was organized at a mass meeting in Weldon. Officers include the Rev. Alexander D. Moseley, pastor of First Baptist Church here, as chairman, and A. C. Cofield, funeral director in Weldon, treasurer.

SCEF is contributing the services of its staff in an advisory capacity for publicity and fund-raising. The address of the Defense Fund is c/o the Rev. Mr. Moseley, P.O. Box 47, Weldon, N. C. Financial contributions should be sent there.